



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Luxembourg

International Religious Freedom Report 2004

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has a total area of 999 square miles, and its population is approximately 450,000. The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remains the predominant faith. According to a 1979 law, the Government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation; but over 90 percent of the population is estimated to be baptized Catholic. The Lutheran and Calvinist Churches are the largest Protestant denominations. Muslims are estimated to number approximately 6,000 persons, including approximately 885 refugees from Montenegro; Orthodox (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian) adherents are estimated to number approximately 5,000 persons; and there are approximately 1,000 Jews. The Baha'i Faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Universal Church, and members of Jehovah's Witnesses are represented in smaller numbers. The number of professed atheists reportedly is growing.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups. Many small, nontraditional religious groups are represented in the country, but their activities have not become significant political or social issues.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. The Government does not register religions or religious groups. However, based on the Concordat of 1801, some churches receive financial support from the State. The Constitution specifically provides for state payment of the salaries of clergy. Pursuant to negotiated agreements with the Government, the following religious groups receive such support: Roman Catholic; Greek and Russian Orthodox; Jewish; and some Protestant denominations.

In January 2003, the Government signed a convention to extend this support to the Anglican Church; the legislation needed to complete this convention was passed in May. Legislation covering similar conventions was also passed in May for the Romanian and Serbian Orthodox Churches. An application for financial support for the Muslim community has been under consideration for over 6 years. The Muslim community's agreement to name a national representative and single interlocutor allowed discussions to proceed on their desire to receive similar government funding; however, there was no agreement by the end of the reporting period.

The following religious holidays are considered national holidays: Shrove Monday; Easter Monday; Ascension Day; Whit Monday; Assumption Day; All Saints Day; All Souls Day; Christmas Day; and the second day of Christmas.

There is a long tradition of religious education in public schools. A 1997 convention between the Minister of National Education and the Roman Catholic Archbishop governs religious instruction. In accordance with this convention, religious instruction is a local matter, coordinated at the communal level between representatives of the Catholic Church and communal authorities. Government-paid lay teachers provide instruction (totaling 2 school hours per week) at the primary school level. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Roman Catholicism or an ethics course; requests for exemption from religious instruction are addressed on an individual basis. Although approximately 85 percent of primary school students choose religious instruction, the number drops to 65 percent for high school students. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Churches have an agreement for the provision of instruction in the Protestant religions within the overall framework of religious instruction in the school system. There are oral agreements between Catholics and Protestants at the local level to provide religious instruction to Protestant students, as required, during school hours. Protestant instruction is available on demand, and provision of instruction in other faiths may be offered in response to demand.

The State subsidizes private religious schools. All private, religious, and nonsectarian schools are eligible for and receive government subsidies. The State also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Abuse by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths work well together on an interfaith basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its policy to promote human rights.

Released on November 8, 2005

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